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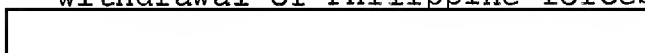
CONTENTS

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Philippines: Marcos reportedly has approved further withdrawal of Philippine forces from Vietnam.

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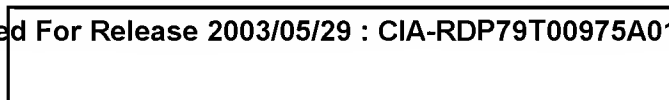


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Next 13 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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25X1

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PHILIPPINES: PRESIDENT MARCOS IS REPORTED TO HAVE APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE A FURTHER REDUCTION OF THE PHILIPPINE PRESENCE IN VIETNAM.

ABOUT 200 PERSONNEL OF THE PHILIPPINE CIVIC ACTION GROUP IN VIETNAM HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN AND NOT REPLACED SINCE MID-MARCH. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THE PHILIPPINE COMMANDER IN VIETNAM HAS SUGGESTED A FURTHER REDUCTION TO 1,400 FROM THE PRESENT STRENGTH OF 1,800. SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MATA HAS PROPOSED THE WITHDRAWAL OF 35 MEN EVERY OTHER WEEK OVER SOME SIX MONTHS.

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THE FILIPINOS HAVE TRIED TO JUSTIFY THE PROJECTED REDUCTION BY POINTING TO RECENT US STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF SOME US FORCES AFTER SOUTH VIETNAMESE COMBAT STRENGTH HAS BEEN INCREASED.

MARCOS MAY HOPE THAT BY AGREEING TO FURTHER REDUCTIONS HE CAN IMPROVE CHANCES FOR PASSAGE OF AN APPROPRIATION BILL THAT HAS BEEN STALLED IN THE SENATE FOR OVER TWO MONTHS, BUT PASSAGE BEFORE THE END OF THE REGULAR CONGRESSIONAL SESSION ON 16 MAY APPEARS UNLIKELY. BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE MARCOS HAS PUBLICLY ATTACHED TO THE VIETNAM GROUP ISSUE, HE MAY FEEL OBLIGED TO CALL A SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS NEXT MONTH TO ACT ON THE MATTER. [REDACTED]

25X1

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25X1

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25X1

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